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MSU professor attempts to quash CIA study grant

By N. Scott Vance
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A math professor said he will ask Michigan State University trustees to reject a \$740,000 research contract awarded to a colleague because it is being administered by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The two-year contract, awarded to Professor Shui Nee Chow and approved by MSU administrators, is being overseen by a mathematician who works for the CIA, Chow said. The contract covers unclassified research in a highly theoretical field of mathematics.

Math Professor John Masterson said he opposes the project because he distrusts the CIA. He also fears that the agency and Defense Department exert too much control over the types of research done on campuses nationwide.

A SIMILAR flap arose at Harvard University this month, and Masterson's concerns have been voiced by a few faculty members on other campuses.

"I think that for an academic institution to be accepting grants from the CIA, with its reputation for being involved in the murder of peo-

ple in Nicaragua, violates the whole concept of the free search for ideas," he said.

He plans to ask the board in December to reject the contract, but MSU spokesman Charles Downs said the board rarely intervenes in such matters. In addition, the math department's associate chairman said there is little opposition to Chow's contract among other faculty members.

Chow said the Defense Department asked the CIA to administer the contract because the spy agency employs an expert in his field of mathematics. "It really has nothing to do with the CIA," he declared.

IN ADDITION, Chow said he is not tailoring his research to the needs of the military or the CIA. His contract is for fundamental research on the same subject he's been investigating for 15 years, he said.

Chow uses mathematical equations in an attempt to explain or detect patterns in events that are seemingly random. His findings, for example, might help explain why weather changes as it does or why water molecules travel through a pipe in a certain fashion, he said. The

money will be used partly to buy a computer.

A spokesman for the American Association of Universities said it's not unusual for the CIA to administer or sponsor university research contracts.

The University of Michigan accepted \$50,000 in CIA research funds last year, according to James Lesch, director of research administration and development. "We treat them as any other sponsors, but we will not accept something that cannot be published or has undue delay in being published," he said.

There is controversy at Harvard over Professor Nadav Safran's acceptance of about \$150,000 from the CIA for studies of Islamic theology and politics. He directs the school's Center for Middle Eastern Studies, where seven faculty members last week asked the university to bar Safran from taking any CIA money.